

Correspondence

From leisure to isolation: a call to explore hotel sectors' role during COVID-19 pandemic

ABSTRACT

In a recent correspondence, authors discussed the role of private companies in fulfilling their corporate social responsibility (CSR) by coming up with their own vaccination program for their employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper supports the invitation for companies to act in accordance with their CSR and by emphasizing the various roles of companies just like what selected hotels do as isolation and quarantine facilities during the pandemic. However, certain considerations and issues must also be addressed by hotel sectors in accomplishing their CSR especially in time of public health crisis.

Keywords COVID-19, hotel sectors, isolation and quarantine facilities, public health

In a recent correspondence, the authors cited that private companies can implement various ways to protect their employees from Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) such as vaccination program as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR).¹ Subsequently, we agree with their argument and would like to add that each company or business has its own contribution in mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the case of selected hotels turning into isolation and quarantine facilities as part of their CSR. However, there are certain considerations and issues that must be given attention so that hotels may fulfill their CSR in this public health crisis.

The hospitality industry, particularly the lodging and accommodations sector, was severely affected by the global pandemic. Traditionally, hotels highly depend on business and leisure travel for their revenue, but with the travel restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, low-to-zero occupancy rates were recorded, and this is due to the efforts of curbing the rate of virus transmission in enclosed facilities.² In the Philippines, during the height of the lockdown, only establishments with valid Department of Tourism accreditation were allowed to operate following the interim guidelines with three different classifications, namely, (i) isolation facilities are for COVID-19 positive guests, (ii) quarantine hotels for guests that may have a virus exposure, while those in areas with low transmission rates are classified

as (iii) regular hotels authorized to offer staycations following the Inter-Agency Task Force protocols.³

With the global restrictions on travel and tourism, hospitality and accommodation industry's ability to generate revenue is affected forcing its business model to change and adapt to the economic pressure. To respond on the operational pressure on the accommodation and lodging, the Department of Tourism Philippines' tourism response and recovery plan (TRRP) which converge various government agencies to assist domestic tourism to focus on business operations, policies and marketing development and in-placed health and safety protocols before, during and after service delivery.⁴ Implementing the Business Model Innovation (BMI) on crises enabled the sector to respond on the financial burden, obligations and limited time, and it was found to have an effective approach in the survival of COVID19.⁵ Though opening the hotel and accommodation sector as quarantine and isolation facilities may be temporary, the BMI may pose another challenge on other segments, such as stigma, human capital and community impact.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitality and health care industries have come together to collaborate by converting hotel facilities as alternative quarantine sites. Prior to the conversion of these hotels, there are mandatory requirements for general site preparations and hotel operating structures.⁶ Several ways have been suggested to support

employees when operating as a COVID-19 quarantine facility. Partnership between hotels and hospitals has involved health care professions to hotel operations. Despite of the said arrangements, anxiety, depression and stress have been identified among quarantine hotel employees.⁷ Employers and government should remain concern to the human resource cycle of these hotel facilities. Creative ways to secure these employees through mental health assistance programs and providing competitive assistance may be employed to mitigate such issue.

Furthermore, community-supervised hotels and other facilities tapped to isolate COVID-19 patients have been discovered to be a more plausible choice than home-based isolation.⁸ Hotels have gone to great lengths to improve the quality of life of host residents, and as such, they play an important role in host community development.⁹ Hotels must also take into account the benefits of the cooperative relationship with the local communities.¹⁰ Governments around the world were quick to implement control measures, but public involvement, or those with lived experiences, must not be disregarded.¹¹ Community volunteers may help in policy implementation, such as through raising awareness using various mobile and social media channels and through identifying high-risk groups in their locality.¹² When communities are rallied by governments to participate in policymaking and implementation, their well-being must not be overlooked. Authorities and policymakers, aside from containing the outbreak, must address the psychological impacts of the pandemic.¹³

Hence, selected hotels as isolation and quarantine facilities are also playing significant roles in this pandemic, and they must be given attention as well because they also face human and community impacts in fulfilling their corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the time of public health crisis.

Funding

No funding was received from this paper.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest in this paper.

Authorship contribution Statement

All authors contributed to all aspects of the manuscript.

References

1 Vicente NE, Cordero DA. 'Because we care': private companies to embody the corporate social responsibility for a successful

COVID-19 vaccination program in the Philippines. *J Public Health* 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdab140> (2 May 2021, date last accessed).

- 2 Pillai SG *et al.* COVID-19 and hospitality 5.0: redefining hospitality operations. *Int J Hosp Manag* 2021;**94**:1–11. doi: [10.1016/j.ijhm.2021.102869](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2021.102869)
- 3 HRAP. *ADVISORY 2021–076: Extension Effectivity of Interim Operation Guidelines for Accommodation Establishments*. 2021 April 14, 2021 April 30, 2021; <https://www.main.hrap.org.ph/advisory/2021-076>.
- 4 Rocamora, J.A. *DOT Vows to 'Innovate' Ways for Tourism Recovery*. 2021 January 29, 2021 [cited 2021 April 30, 2021]; <https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1129002> (2 May 2021, date last accessed).
- 5 Hao F, Xiao Q, Chon K. COVID-19 and China's hotel industry: impacts, a disaster management framework, and post-pandemic agenda. *Int J Hosp Manag* 2020;**90**:102636.
- 6 ASHE-AHLA. *Hotel-Hospital COVID-19 Response Playbook*. 2020 April 2020 [cited 2021 April 30, 2021]; https://www.ahla.com/sites/default/files/hotels_-_hospital_conversion_and_ops_playbook_final_0_0.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3ILy26d4D4eCRrXPn3mOjYZ8BywOMpg_4K2VTKkZjFpwMqqMfWPHLIBog.
- 7 Teng Y-M, Wu KS, Lin KL *et al.* Mental health impact of COVID-19 on quarantine hotel employees in China. *Risk Manag Healthc Policy* 2020;**13**:2743–51.
- 8 López M, Gallego C, Abós-Herrández R *et al.* Impact of isolating COVID-19 patients in a supervised community facility on transmission reduction among household members. *J Public Health* 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdab002>
- 9 Bohdanowicz P, Zientara P. Hotel companies' contribution to improving the quality of life of local communities and the well-being of their employees. *Tour Hosp Res* 2009;**9**(2):147–58.
- 10 Appiah JK. Community-based corporate social responsibility activities and employee job satisfaction in the U.S. hotel industry: an explanatory study. *J Hosp Tour Manag* 2019;**38**:140–8.
- 11 Richards T, Scowcroft H. Patient and public involvement in covid-19 policy making. *Bmj* 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m2575>
- 12 Ekzayez A, al-Khalil M, Jasiem M *et al.* COVID-19 response in northwest Syria: innovation and community engagement in a complex conflict. *J Public Health* 2020;**42**(3):504–9.
- 13 Bäuerle A, Skoda EM, Dörrie N *et al.* Psychological support in times of COVID-19: the Essen community-based CoPE concept. *J Public Health* 2020;**42**(3):649–50.

Jay A. Aquino¹, Jeffrey T. Banal¹, Felipe B. Pablo IV¹,
Joy D. David¹, Philip Joseph D. Sarmiento²

¹School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Holy Angel University, Angeles City 2009, Philippines

²Christian Living Education Department, Holy Angel University, Angeles City 2009, Philippines

Address correspondence to Jay A. Aquino,

E-mail: jaquino@hau.edu.ph

doi: [10.1093/pubmed/fdab172](https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdab172)